1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

"Tremendous interest in property, together with a simple and declining culture, results in my being a seriously disturbing element in their lives. Casual conversation always degenerates into a squabble about gift-giving .... There is intense pleasure in possession. Children get no sympathy when they are hurt, but objects are usually given to them. Every child has the right at least 'to see' anything he desires. In this respect children are pampered. Adults whine for things; withholding a desired object makes them intensely unhappy. Aggressive possession is admired.. Trade games make the exchange of property very fluid. Yet values in trade are well defined, and there is no prestige in giving more than one gets. Within the kinship circle, however, the old lavish property on the young. A father's garden is spoken of as that of his five year old son. There is a deliberate attempt to instill aggressive ownership attitudes in the young. A three year old girl is taught to claim objects in a loud voice. This is done by shouting the possessive pronoun....

"These are a settled people who live within the strict limits of their village. Their small number has advantage in the study of individuals. They have no knowledge of the world beyond the Kuluene-Kuliseu. It has no more real existence than the various inhabited regions of the heavens. The half dozen expeditions which have passed down the river have communicated with the natives only with signs. The one important result of such contact was division from peripheral tribes and the rise of metal tools. The disappearance of the stone industry, on which a defunct Trumaí moiety had a monopoly, has occurred within the last generation.[1] The increased leisure which probably resulted is not utilized economically.

"The complete lack of self-consciousness among these people makes behavior observation remarkably easy. Before I knew any of the language, I could sit by the hour in various households and time the actions of people while they paid no attention to me. For instance, one man during twenty minutes of leisure lay down to rest in his hammock fifteen different times, but each time disturbed himself with the remembrance of some petty chore undone....

"The only restriction of behavior that I have seen in casual intra-village personal relations is that the children are told not to litter the floor. The only positive rule is that the head of a household must sit with a guest and converse while the guest is inside his house .... Furthermore, extra-marital sexual intercourse has occurred in a shadowy corner of my house.. This lack of self-consciousness contrasts strongly with the Karajá, who are more prudish than the Fijians....

"Shortage of women, because of theft of young women, polygamy, lack of sexual interest in old wives (of which there are several), and

[1] Quain refers here to the moiety-like division of the Trumaí which has been discussed in Chapter Three. This appears to be rather a result of the merger of the northern and southern Trumaí villages. The latter specialised in axe-making.

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[3 7]

embedded individual crystals of olivine and quite a number of quartz granules. The blades, 11-21 centimeters long, are usually evenly cylindrical, but some are round in the center like a roller, taper toward the rear, and have a broad front end with a bow-shaped cutting edge. Without any lashing, they fit into a wooden handle 0.5 meters long on the average, which consists of a cylindrical upper piece bored crosswise and a thinner handle set off from this like a reed stalk from its spike. The stone points inserted in the darts and the ornamental stones of the neck chains are made of the same diabase. The Trumaí ground the blades to a point on their stones and bored the ornamental stones; besides them, only the neighboring Yaulapiti did this. The other tribes simply sharpened on the river sandstone the axes that became dull. Shells and stones were bored with a twirl-borer. A triangular, hard splinter of stone was clamped to a small staff, and, to be sure, at both ends so that one could alternate them, and was secured by cord lashing. The little staff was almost half a meter long and was twirled between the hands. If stone was to be bored, sand was added. This is all the Indians achieved in the working of stone; they had

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Fig. 21.
Twirl-borer.*
(1/2 nat. size/ as shown in the original illustration/.)

*The twirl-staff is represented discontinuously.